FORUM LECTURE SERIES No. 2.

CAN SOCIALISM COME BY CONSTITUTIONAL METHODS ?

BY

SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

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Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Methods ?

BY SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

Now that the Labour Party is face to face with the realisation of a policy which it has consistently preached for many years, the difficulties of carrying through that policy loom larger and larger as the moment for its application approaches.

History is full of the records of revolutionary movements which have changed the basis of society in various countries. Internal strife between class and class has been one of the constant features of civilisation, but in almost every case these revolutions, whether successful or unsuccessful, have been accompanied by violence and bloodshed. The Labour Party—in contradistinction to the more violent revolutionary parties—has always urged that it is possible in this country to bring about such a fundamental change by peaceful or constitutional means. It is this claim that I propose to examine.

It is of no use in this examination to minimise the difficulties with which such a change is surrounded. In the past we have been accustomed to see the conflict between Party and Party fought out with varying degrees of bitterness and intensity. In these major political battles the fight has ranged around specific topics of apparent importance—Tariffs or Free Trade, the Irish situation or the right of some part of the community to electoral franchise,—but always upon the understanding that, whichever party succeeded, the fundamental Capitalist structure of Society would be preserved. The Labour Party are not now concerned so much with some particular political orientation of Capitalist society as with the change from Capitalism to Socialism. Continuity of Policy—even in fundamentals—can find no place in a Socialist programme. It is this complete severance with all traditional theories of Government, this determination to seize power from the Ruling class and transfer it to the people as a whole that differentiates the present political struggle from all those that have gone before.

Those who have held radical and humanitarian views have counted upon the pressure of the ever-widening democratic basis of the electoral franchise to compel Capitalism to yield better and better terms to the workers. In the pre-war period this theory of gradual advance seemed plausible enough. With a growing

national prosperity, the national standard of living showed a steady rise. Capitalism was ready to pay a price for its continued control in the form of higher wages and fuller and better social services of all kinds. During and immediately after the war this tendency, became even more developed. The workers demonstrated their strength and their power to protect Capitalism with their lives and their labour; their demands were satisfied so far as the Capitalists considered it economically possible, but always with the reservation that nothing must be done to deprive Capitalism of its effective power of control whether in the financial, economic or political sphere.

As soon as it became apparent that the limit of concession was being reached and that with a growing slump in world trade Capitalism would break down under the burden it had taken upon itself in more prosperous times, an immediate halt was called; the National Government was formed to protect Capitalism and to bring about a rapid reversal of the progress by the withdrawal of the concessions which had been made to the workers. It was essential that the Government should be called National as otherwise it might have occurred to the great mass of the electorate that it was merely a device to stabilise capitalism and not, as was claimed for it, a means to save the country.

The importance of these recent political events to our present enquiry is that they provide the clearest demonstration of the power of Capitalism to overthrow a popularly elected Government by extra-parliamentary means.

The ruling class will go to almost any length to defeat Parliamentary action if the issue is the direct issue as to the continuance of their financial and political control. If the change to Socialism is to be brought about peacefully a Socialist Party must be fully prepared to deal with every kind of opposition direct and indirect and with financial and political sabotage of the most thorough and ingenious kind.

The first requisite in bringing about a peaceful revolution is to obtain a Parliamentary majority of adequate size to carry all necessary measures through the House of Commons. This majority must be definitely and irrevocably pledged to Socialism and must not depend in any way upon the assistance of merely radical or humanitarian elements. Given such a majority, success or failure will be proved in the first full Parliamentary term. Unless during the first five years so great a degree of change has been accomplished as to deprive Capitalism of its power, it is unlikely that a Socialist Party will be able to maintain its position of control without adopting some exceptional means such as the prolongation of the life of Parliament for a further term without an election. Whether such action would be possible would depend entirely upon the temper of the country, and this in turn would be dependant upon the actual results which the Government could show.

The most critical period, however, for a Socialist Government will be the first few months of power. But there will even before this be a time of great crisis for the country and of vital importance to the Socialists. As soon as it becomes apparent to the Capitalists that the Socialists will have a majority, plans will be laid for counter-Socialist activities. For a period the Capitalist Government must normally remain in power, but obviously they will take no active steps to assist their successors, and their successors will be powerless themselves to act. This period would usually last for a few days, but if the outgoing Government decides to meet Parliament and not to resign until after a Parliamentary defeat the period may be prolonged into weeks.

It is during this period that the Socialists will have to decide upon their tactics. First whether under any and what conditions they will accept office, and second as to who they shall appoint to hold office for the party. It is impossible to foreshadow all the many different sets of circumstances that may arise and that will influence the decision upon the first point. My own view is that if the Socialists are to take office they must feel themselves assured of two things, a working majority in the House of Commons and a majority of votes in the country, discounting all plural votes. This majority must not be merely a majority of discontents against the outgoing Government but a majority in favour of an active policy of Socialism. Satisfied on these two points, it may be that under the circumstances of the moment some further guarantee would be necessary as to the behaviour of the House of Lords on certain urgent and critical matters, or as to means of dealing with the House of Lords if by their obstruction they were to make it impossible for a Socialist Government to exercise the necessary measures of control. The necessity for any such guarantees cannot now be foretold but will have to be decided upon by the party at the appropriate moment.

When the decision has been taken by the party as to whether they will accept office, it will have to be made clear to the country that it is the party that is going to accept power and not some individual or individuals. Under existing circumstances the Prime Minister is theoretically and practically free to choose his own colleagues and his primary responsibility is as an individual minister to the Crown.

The political party to which the Prime Minister belongs has no right or power to recall the Prime Minister and replace him by some person more able and willing to direct policy along the lines required by the party. In a Socialist Party this power is I believe essential, and more especially so during its early days of power. I do not propose to deal here with the method of selecting party leaders or Cabinet ministers, as that is a political rather than a constitutional question. But however the selection is made the constitutional position of the party must be clearly laid down.

The formation of a Government must be the work of the party, and the party must have the right at any time to substitute fresh ministers in the places of any they desire to recall.

When the party has come to a decision upon these two matters the list of ministers will be submitted to the Crown and their appointment will follow. The Socialist Government will then be in control of the country. The time between the decision to accept office and the actual appointment of ministers must be reduced to a minimum, as it will be a time of great danger in which saboteurs will be able to crystallise their plans for opposition and to concentrate their forces.

From the moment when the Government takes control rapid and effective action must be possible in every sphere of the national life. It will not be easy to detect the machinations of the Capitalists, and when discovered there must be means ready to hand by which they can be dealt with promptly. The greatest danger point will be the financial and credit structure of the country and the Foreign Exchange position. We may liken the position that will arise somewhat to that which arose in August, 1914, but with this difference, that at the beginning of the War the Capitalists, though very nervous and excited, were behind the Government to a man, whereas when the Socialist Government takes office they will not only be nervous and excited but against the Government to a man. The Government's first step will be to call Parliament together at the earliest moment and place before it an Emergency Powers Bill to be passed through all its stages on the first day. This Bill will be wide enough in its terms to allow all that will be immediately necessary to be done by ministerial orders. These orders must be incapable of challenge in the Courts or in any way except in the House of Commons.

This Bill must be ready in draft beforehand, together with the main orders that will be made immediately upon its becoming law.

It is probable that the passage of this Bill will raise in its most acute form the constitutional crisis.

It will be necessary—if constitutional forms are to be complied with—to obtain the consent of the House of Lords to this Bill, and that consent must be given immediately, as otherwise the Socialist Government cannot be responsible for the safety of the country or the continued supply of foodstuffs and raw material from overseas.

It is most probable that the House of Lords—the stronghold of Capitalism—will either reject or more likely delay the passage of such a Bill. The Commons will be in a strong position as the election will have so recently taken place, and it may be that guarantees as to the passage of such a Bill may have been obtained as a condition of the taking of office.

If this is not so, then immediate application will have to be

made to the Crown to resolve the conflict by the creation of Peers, and although this will necessitate some delay, it is better to risk this delay, which need not be excessive, than to adopt any unconstitutional alternative. Should the Crown refuse there would then be two alternative lines of action open to the Government, first immediate resignation, throwing the responsibility back upon the Capitalists, or second, an unconstitutional continuance in power with a total disregard of the Lords. This latter course would lead to an immediate conflict not only with the Crown and the Lords, but with the Judiciary, who would then refuse to recognise the Acts of the House of Commons unconfirmed by the House of Lords and the Crown. Such a conflict would throw the country into confusion and would almost certainly result in an uprising of the Capitalists which would have to be quelled by force, and would lead to the very difficulties that it is most desired to avoid.

Returning therefore to the first alternative, the Capitalist Government in a minority would have to accept office, or an immediate second General Election would ensue, on the sole issue of the right of the Lords to obstruct the emergency legislation. On such an issue the Socialist Party would, I think, be in a strong position, and—provided they could " beg, borrow or steal " the funds to fight the election—would have a second and perhaps even greater success. In this event the Capitalists would have to yield, if they did not the Socialist Government re-assured of the country's support, would be justified in overriding any obstruction it found placed in its way.

There is perhaps one other possibility that we should envisage in the case of such a conflict and that is a dictatorship. The Crown has the right constitutionally only to accept advice from the Prime Minister, or such other person as the Prime Minister advises the Crown to consult. If once the Socialist Government resigned and advised the Crown to send for one of the leaders of the other parties, it might happen that none of them were prepared to take office and that eventually some stop-gap Ministry might be found which would rely upon the support of the armed forces of the Crown rather than upon any popular mandate, as indeed has happened in other countries. To throw the power into the hands of such a military dictatorship would be the worst possible thing for the country.

If the Socialist Government came to the conclusion that there was any real danger of such a step being taken, it would probably be better and more conducive to the general peace and welfare of the country for the Socialist Government to make itself temporarily into a dictatorship until the matter could again be put to the test at the polls.

There is no doubt that at the present juncture of world politics there is a liability in all countries for the people to be unable to make up their minds as to whether they desire a complete change

or not. That indecision leads to political stalemates upon which dictatorships thrive. It will be a tragedy if such a position arises in this country, especially if the dictatorship is militarist in form and capitalist in faith. It is because of this possibility that it is so vitally necessary to arouse the political consciousness of the peoples of this country, by every possible form of educational propaganda. At the moment, as recent by-elections have shown, the whole country is suffering from political apathy, and it is our duty to see that that apathy is replaced by a political consciousness.

I have stressed the critical nature of this early stage of Socialist power because the possibility of finding a constitutional way through this early stage will, I think, largely determine whether Socialism comes peacefully or by violence. Every person and party in the country will have a share in the responsibility for what happens, but the responsibility will lie heaviest on those—if any—who attempt to bring to nought the considered opinion and wishes of the majority of the electorate.

It will be of first-rate importance to put this position clearly before the people at the election, so that they may give the Socialist Party a definite mandate upon it. It is upon this mandate that the Socialists will rely in asking for the creation of Peers, if that step becomes necessary. The mandate should be precise upon the point that the machinery of the Parliament Act—which requires a delay of two years before Bills can be passed against the Opposition of the Lords—is quite useless and cannot be relied upon as an argument against taking immediate steps to deal with the Lords.

This constitutional crisis will thus result either in the capitalists giving way to the will of the people expressed and enforced constitutionally, or in a Capitalist or Socialist dictatorship relying for its power upon force alone. Such a dictatorship will almost inevitably lead to revolution and violence, with what result it is impossible to foretell.

If we imagine that this initial difficulty has been overcome constitutionally, as I believe it can be by the means I have described, the Government will then be in a position to exercise a general protective control over the monetary and financial activities of the country. Many far-reaching changes may have to be made to protect the country from the Capitalist attack, but a more democratic and more satisfactory method of permanent legislation will have to be worked out.

With a Socialist Government a far higher tempo of legislation will be required than any they yet achieved in this country. The changes to be brought about are so far-reaching and all inclusive that their legislative elaboration must take time even if the most efficient means are adopted.

With the present machinery the necessary legislation would take centuries to pass.

I have already dealt with one aspect of the difficulties arising

from the House of Lords, that is the immediate problem, but it will be equally necessary to eliminate delay and opposition consequent upon a second chamber in subsequent legislation. There is only one safe and satisfactory means of doing this and that is by the abolition of the House of Lords. Some form of revising or consultative second chamber may be set up in the future, but there will be no time to do this in the initial stages of socialisation, and in any event there can never be more than one sovereign body and that must be the House of Commons.

Our constitution is not based upon any fixed or immutable laws, nor do we require any special procedure to change it. This so-called flexibility is our greatest asset, it should enable the constitution to adapt itself momentarily to the desires and wishes of the people. The one flaw in that flexibility is the House of Lords with its permanent reactionary majority. There is, however, a safety valve to our political machine, and that is the right of the Prime Minister representing the popular majority in the House of Commons to demand the creation of Peers. If this has already been done for the purpose of the emergency legislation, the House of Lords will probably consent to its own abolition. If not, and this safety valve is sat upon, there will be an explosion with the usual unfortunate result for those who sit on safety valves. If on the other hand it is allowed to operate, we shall be able rapidly to adapt our constitutional methods to the necessities of the time of change. It must in any event be made clear at the General Election that the mandate of the party covers the right to call for the immediate abolition of the House of Lords upon the first signs of obstruction.

The legislative methods of this country have passed through many phases. In early times when the subject matter of legislation was far less complex than now, full play could be given to discussion and obstruction in Parliament. Every detail could be discussed in set speeches with due solemnity and interminable repetition. But as successive Governments extended the area of control over individual activities the necessity for a greater legislative output arose and more speedy and efficient procedure was forced upon the legislature. Legislation has gradually come to be divided into two categories. Acts of Parliament dealing in the main with the more important matters and with principles are passed through all their numerous stages in both Houses of Parliament, while the detailed provisions for the administration of particular services are laid down in Provisional Orders, Orders in Council or statutory rules and orders. Such orders are made by the responsible ministers under the authority of the Cabinet and are subject to either negative or positive Parliamentary approval. This method of legislation has been gradually developed until under the present Government the most important matters, such as taxation of the subject by import duties, have come to be dealt with by administrative orders.

Another means that has been adopted for getting rid of congestion in Parliament is the delegation of power to local authorities. This method is satisfactory provided the local authorities are willing and capable, but it is necessary to retain some measure of central control to ensure that the delegated powers are fully and properly exercised, more especially while the political complexion of certain local authorities is different to that of the central government.

Under Capitalism it has been necessary to have side by side with public Bills regulating generally the life of the community, a system of private Bills authorising the interference by local authorities or corporations with the property of particular individuals. It is not necessary to dwell upon this class of legislation which has occupied so much Parliamentary time in the last hundred years, as under a system of Socialism, Private Bills will no longer be necessary.

The House of Commons has always considered itself in a special way concerned with the guardianship of the country's finances, and has insisted, until the National Government came into power, that it should exert the fullest and most rigorous control upon all financial matters. This perfectly proper attitude has however led to a good deal of time being wasted upon such matters as financial resolutions, which precede practically every Bill introduced and merely lead to a duplication of second reading debates.

Finally there have been introduced into the procedure of the House of Commons in comparatively recent times a number of procedural devices for eliminating intentional waste of time by the opposition.

The opposition has always considered itself justified in doing all it can to delay the passing of pratically every Act of Parliament on the assumption that everything its opponents attempt must be bad. To get over the intolerable waste of time entailed, the closure, the guillotine, time-table motions, kangaroo procedure and other devices have been introduced. Of these, the time-table motion, laying down specific times for the discussion of specific matters, is the best and should be applied throughout to all the work of the House of Commons.

It is by the reasonable and intelligent development of all these methods of increasing the legislative output that the House of Commons can best be made capable for its new task.

So far as delegation to local authorities is concerned, I cannot here enter upon the wide and difficult question of Local Government. It is however of the first importance that the whole conception of Local Government responsibility should be revised. A larger unit will be required acting in more direct consultation with the central authority and with the widest administrative powers in its own area. Regional Councils having such powers and functions must form a most important link in the Socialist scheme if Socialism is to be more than a name. It will not only

be necessary for the Central Government to pass Socialist measures, but it will be necessary to have Socialist Regional Councils to see that they are carried through promptly and efficiently.

In the extended use of Ministerial orders for giving legislative effect to the general principles laid down by Parliament, one great change must be effected. At the present time it is left to the Courts to decide whether these orders are within the powers given by Parliament. It is always possible for them to be challenged in the Courts and to be declared invalid. This power must be taken from the Courts and the sole right to challenge such orders must rest with Parliament. With this alteration a far greater bulk of the legislative work can be put through by this method than is the case even at the present time.

Parliament will not only have to be relieved of a great deal of work, but even so far as its remaining work is concerned, the procedure must be speeded up and made more effective.

There is only one matter that it will be necessary to discuss in any great detail upon the floor of the House and that is the general plan of the national life, economic and social. At the present time there is no plan, the nearest approach to such a thing that we ever experience is when a Government chooses to compile a King's Speech which gives its programme in some detail. But such a discussion is divorced from any financial plan and is really little more than a discussion of a number of separate and unrelated suggestions.

Socialism insists upon a planned and ordered national life. The central feature of Socialist legislation must therefore be the planning and Finance Bill for the year. Every year—as now with the Budget—a Bill of this nature will have to be introduced and discussed. It will lay down the main lines of legislation in every sphere for the coming year or period of years and will merit and receive the fullest discussion. Once this Bill is passed little other legislation by Act of Parliament will be required and such as is necessary will be of secondary importance only and will be so treated. It will be made impossible, by appropriate resolutions, to re-discuss the merits of the Plan once that Plan has been decided upon.

Such a Planning and Finance Bill would take the place of the King's Speech, the Budget, financial resolutions and the second reading debate on most of the important measures during the year. It is idle once Parliament has decided upon a certain course of action to discuss its wisdom again and again. It will probably be advisable to pass this Bill before the beginning of each year, that is in an Autumn Session. Once the Bill is passed, most of its provisions can be given more detailed legislative shape in Ministerial orders, which will be submitted formally to Parliament for approval.

Even on this Bill it will be necessary to proceed by time-table, so as to obviate obstruction and waste of time.

Such secondary legislation as arises out of the plan will be brought before Parliament for a short second reading stage which will be on the floor of the House, and one final stage, during which Government amendments alone will be dealt with.

The whole of the rest of the Parliamentary activities will centre around a system of Standing Committees. Each Standing Committee will have assigned to it all the work arising in connection with a particular group of Governmental activities. Every member of Parliament will serve upon at least one such committee ; the personnel of the Committees will be chosen in the usual manner so as to ensure a Government majority in all cases. These committees will not only do the usual committee work on Bills dealing with the subject assigned to them, but will exercise a general supervision over the whole area of those functions of the Government with which they are concerned.

At the present time control over Governmental expenditure is nominally exercised by the House of Commons by passing votes on supply. The opposition on the 20 days allotted by rule to supply can call for any particular departmental vote they wish and can raise any question upon the administration of that department, but the rules of procedure do not allow any discussion upon matters which would require legislation.

These debates generally take place in a more or less empty House and serve no purpose except to allow grievances to be aired.

All matters of supply should be dealt with by the Standing Committees, and suggestions as to legislation should be allowed in such debates. The whole procedure of the Standing Committees must be regulated by time-table to prevent obstructive tactics being employed by the opposition.

The right of criticism of the Government must of course be preserved, and for this purpose a certain number of days in the year should be allotted to the opposition to raise any matters that they wish, whether by vote of censure or in any other way.

Many of the Standing Committees could in this way be dealing with business contemporaneously, and a great deal of the time of the House would be saved. The Standing Committees, like the House itself, should be in continuous session throughout the year, with the exception of the summer recess. With the more expeditious methods of dealing with business it would probably be possible to limit the actual sittings to, say, alternative weeks. This would be of importance, as with a Socialist Government it would be vital to enable the Socialist members to spend time in their regions and constituencies, not only making known the object and progress of the plan, but assisting as members of the regional councils to see that it is carried through.

Back bench members of the House of Commons, on the Government side especially, complain with justice that their services are

not utilised and that they have nothing to do except walk through the Division Lobbies. Nothing can be worse for the morale of a party than the disappointment and apathy which arise from such circumstances. With a system of Standing Committees there could be no reason why every member should not take an active part ; if in addition each member is expected to do work in his own region during alternate weeks, he should find himself fully occupied with important and responsible work.

There is one other matter of importance with regard to House of Commons procedure. At present it is generally accepted that any Government defeat—except upon the most trivial point—should lead to the resignation of the Government. This theory leads to the necessity of persons voting with the Government on matters that are not in any way fundamental, and in which they do not believe.

With a Socialist Government it should be made clear that no defeat will be accepted as fatal unless it is upon a point which the Government declare to be one of primary importance. Such an understanding would enable the House to discuss and vote upon matters of detail on their merits, which at present is seldom possible. Defeats in Standing Committees would not of course be considered fatal to the Government, though they might have an adverse effect upon the Minister in charge of the department concerned.

If the Government were to be defeated in a Standing Committee, provision should exist for bringing the matter automatically before the House of Commons, so that the House, as a whole, could reverse the decision if it wished.

I have only sketched these proposals in the broadest outline ; they will require detailed elaboration and new standing orders will be necessary to initiate the alterations. This change should be made as soon as possible, as until the procedure is changed there will be the greatest temptation for the Government to become more and more dictatorial, and even to merge into a dictatorship.

Perhaps an even more important matter than Parliamentary reform in the initial stages of the change will be the reform of the Cabinet and the re-grouping of departments.

It has long been recognised that a large Cabinet, the members of which are concerned with all the intricate details of day-to-day administration, is a very inefficient body for discussing and deciding many of the major issues that come before it. This difficulty will be greatly emphasized under Socialism when a plan has to be worked out.

The Cabinet must be a smaller body and the individuals who compose it must be less taken up with administrative details.

By a re-grouping of the departments, old and new, into 8 to 10 main groups, each under the general charge of a Cabinet Minister assisted by a number of efficient assistant ministers, the Cabinet can be reduced in number and yet retain contact with all the

activities it controls. This contact, which is essential, will be preserved by the almost daily meetings of the Chief Minister with his assistant ministers in a sort of sub-Cabinet, which will decide everything except issues of really first class importance.

The Cabinet will thus have time to devote to the working out of the plan of national development and as part of this system there must be a large and expert body of planners who will be able to supply expert Socialist knowledge on the technical side. It will be essential for this body of experts to be inspired by the Socialist ideal, and not to spend their time looking for difficulties and explaining that they cannot be overcome.

With the widening of the scope of Governmental action certain new departments will be required—notably a department of finance, of which the Treasury may form a sub-department. The new departments and the old will be formed into groups, the division being functional and not traditional. The exact form which this re-arrangement will take will depend to some extent upon the circumstances and conveniences of the moment, and will no doubt in the first stages be experimental. There will be a number of technical difficulties to be dealt with in this re-grouping arising out of existing Acts of Parliament or constitutional rules which deal with the functions of different departments and with certain requirements as to the numbers of ministers and the House in which they sit. These can easily be overcome.

The Cabinet should be accommodated in a single central office building where the closest touch can be maintained between the members at all times. Members of the Cabinet will have to act mainly as a "general staff" working out a co-ordinated plan and less as departmental chiefs with competitive claims on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as is generally the case to-day.

It is often suggested that one of the difficulties of Socialism will be the impossibility of running state industries with efficiency. This argument arises from a complete inability to appreciate the change that is to be brought about.

It would be very unfair to expect the present Civil Service with its traditions and education to enter upon the management and control of manufacturing and producing units all over the country.

The State control and ownership of industry requires the development of a new technique of direction. Without entering upon the discussion of the thorny problem of workers' control, it must be apparent that quite new methods of administration will require to be adopted. The country had a good deal of experience of this problem during the war, and even during that orgy of capitalist profiteering many efficient departments were set up to control all sorts of State enterprises of the most technical character. Of course if a newly taken over industry were to be subjected to the sort of control which the present Treasury would consider right,

it would inevitably fail. That is because the present Treasury officials have been brought up in a tradition which abhors State enterprise and which therefore concludes that it is bound to fail. There will no doubt be a great opportunity in the new departments for young and progressive civil servants who will set out with the intention of making a success of their job. The old departments will still have full scope for their activities, and it is, I hope, unlikely that even so complete a change in administrative outlook will necessitate the retirement of many civil servants, or their replacement by persons of known Socialist views.

It will be of the first importance to ensure the rapid and loyal functioning of all departments of the Civil Service, if success is to be won.

These are some of the most important changes that must be brought about to enable our present political machine to be accelerated to the tempo of Socialism. With such adaptations as these and a great fund of enthusiastic support in the country, I think that we can make the machine work and gradually change and adapt it further to our needs in the light of our experience.

The primary object is to preserve democracy, in the sense that the people through Parliament initiate the main lines of the National Plan and have power to see that it is carried out. We cannot hope that any democratic assembly will be able to carry on the detailed legislative or administrative work. This must be left to the ministers and, if they fail in their responsibilities, Parliament will be able to turn them out.

There is one further aspect of the constitutional problem which I must mention.

The electoral system in any country influences the complexion of the Government elected, and it is important that the system should be such as to ensure that the Government represents the policy desired by the majority of the electors. It is doubtful whether time could be found within the first five years of Socialism —even if it were desirable—to reorganise entirely the whole electoral system, but certain glaring anomalies will have to be removed. The University vote, and all other forms of plural voting, must be done away with, and certain reforms introduced to eliminate the power of money. This at least will remove the capitalist bias of the existing machinery and enable the electors to choose fairly the policy they desire.

However carefully laid the plans of the Socialists may be, it will be impossible to guarantee the peacefulness of the change. This must depend upon the action not only of the Socialists but of the Capitalists too.

It is, I believe, possible to make the change by constitutional means, but I have no doubt that the first five years will be five years of continual anxiety and effort—an uphill fight against forces of immense strength. The first few months of power will

probably determine the issue one way or the other. The decisive blow at capitalism must be struck while the people's mandate is fresh and strong. That blow can be delivered constitutionally; if unconstitutional means are used to resist it, those who use unconstitutional means must not complain if they are met with force. If real achievement can be shown during this period, the morale of the Socialists throughout the country will be sustained and their support assured. It is only with that support that any programme of Socialism can be carried through.

NOTE.—Signed pamphlets are from time to time published by the League to stimulate discussion on important subjects. It must not be taken that all the views expressed by individual authors are necessarily those of the Socialist League.

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